

# Delaware Ranks Second in CDC's Breastfeeding Survey of Maternity Hospitals

**DOVER** – Delaware maternity hospitals have much to be proud of including a new ranking for their support of breastfeeding mothers. Delaware ranks second the country in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) 2015 national survey of Maternity Practices in Infant Nutrition and Care (mPINC).

Delaware received its highest score in the history of the mPINC survey, a 90, tying with New Hampshire. Rhode Island received the nation's high score of 96. Delaware's score is up from 86 in 2013 and 63 in 2007. All eligible Delaware hospitals participated in the survey, which measures infant feeding care practices, policies, and staffing expectations in place at hospitals that provide maternity services.

"Breastfeeding is a public health priority because it provides the optimal nutrition for infants," said Division of Public Health (DPH) Director Dr. Karyl Rattay making the announcement at the quarterly meeting of the Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium in Dover. "Breastfed babies are protected from many illnesses and diseases and they get the healthiest start."

Breastfeeding protects babies from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), diarrhea, ear infections, pneumonia, allergies, and asthma. Babies who are breastfed for six months are less likely to become obese. There are other benefits as well. Breastfeeding mothers have less risk of breast and ovarian cancers, and lose pregnancy weight faster. U.S. households with breastfed infants can save between \$1,200 and \$1,500 in infant formula expenditures in the first year.

Delaware earned perfect scores (100 percent) for including

breastfeeding in prenatal patient education, hospitals having designated staff members who coordinate lactation care, having an initial feeding of breastmilk for both vaginal and cesarean births, not using water and glucose water, having infants in the mothers' rooms at night, and not giving complimentary infant formula samples and marketing products to breastfeeding patients. In July 2015, Delaware became the third state to discontinue the complimentary formula gift bags. Delaware also earned high scores (over 80 percent) for initial skin-to-skin contact of at least 30 minutes within the first hour of birth, having staff who directly observe and assess breastfeeding, providing breastfeeding support to maternity hospital employees, and facilities which have policies that include all 10 model policy elements.

"Creating a breastfeeding culture in our maternity hospitals optimally supports mothers and babies," said Dr. David A. Paul, clinical leader of the Women and Children's Service Line and Chair of the Department of Pediatrics at Christiana Care Health System. "When evidence-based maternity care practices are implemented, breastfeeding rates rise."

Breastfeeding mother Lauren Durk of Dover, held 5-month old daughter Emmery and said "Although breastfeeding can be challenging at times, it has been well worth it to me and I couldn't imagine anything different for us. The health benefits of breastfeeding are important to me and I love the extra bonding time I get to share with my daughter while she nurses." However, Durk recognizes it is not always easy for working mothers to breastfeed.

"Breastfeeding rates in Delaware are still below the national average," said Lisl Phelps, DPH Nurse Consultant and chair of the Delaware Breastfeeding Coalition. "Community support shown by the hospitals is an important step in the right direction as we work to enhance breastfeeding support for new moms." Phelps notes that that Delaware is making significant progress in breastfeeding support due to the collaboration of health

systems, state agencies, and private citizens. Successes include:

- Supporting 2014 legislation and workplace policies that mandates breastfeeding support in the workplace for all employers and employees in the state.
- Including breastfeeding support in state child care regulations and providing training opportunities for child care providers.
- Promoting Breastfeeding Peer Counselors who are providing support to families in 16 locations across the state through public-private partnerships under the Delaware Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program.

Between 2005 and 2015, breastfeeding initiation among WIC participants increased from 35 percent to 54 percent.

- Training 30 lay people throughout the state to increase breastfeeding support for women of color as part of the Generating Equity for our Mothers (GEM) Project, which was aimed at addressing disparities in breastfeeding initiation and duration among African American women.
- Training 610 health care providers and staff in practice-based breastfeeding support through the DPH EPIC-BEST program: Educating Providers in the Community Breastfeeding Education and Support Training.
- Recognizing that four out of six labor and delivery hospitals in Delaware are designated as Baby-Friendly, an international designation which recognizes facilities that provide the information confidence and skills to support infant feeding and mother-baby bonding: Beebe Healthcare, Bayhealth Kent General Hospital, Bayhealth Milford Memorial Hospital, and Christiana Care Health Systems. Approximately 79 percent of Delaware births occur in facilities designated as Baby-Friendly.
- Promoting quality improvement efforts related to breastfeeding support at Saint Francis Hospital and Nanticoke General Hospital.

For more information about the mPINC survey, and to request Spanish translations of the 2015 report, visit the CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity at [www.cdc.gov/mpinc](http://www.cdc.gov/mpinc). The website includes a four-minute animated mPINC video featuring CDC Director Dr. Thomas Frieden.

For more information on breastfeeding, visit the [Breastfeeding Coalition of Delaware](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/) or the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/>.

Delaware WIC clients can access breastfeeding classes, lactation consultants, and information at: <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/chca/dphwicbfhom01.html>.

Of Delaware infants born in 2013, 18.9 percent were breastfed exclusively through six months, compared to 22.3 percent nationally. At one year, 24.5 percent of Delaware infants born in 2013 were breastfed, compared to 30.7 percent nationally.

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.